

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Case File: AA-085084

AK-040-04-EA-023

Applicant: Joe and Jennifer Cizek
30545 Eagle River Road
Eagle River, Alaska 99577

Type of
Action: Right-of-way (43 CFR 2800)

Location: Section 4, T. 13 N., R. 1 E.,
Seward Meridian, Alaska

Prepared By: Dorothy Bonds, Realty Specialist

Preparing
Office: Bureau of Land Management
Anchorage Field Office
6881 Abbott Loop Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Date: May 10, 2004

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

Joe and Jennifer Cizek need to construct a gravel surfaced driveway across public land administered by BLM in order to subdivide and sell the southern part of their property. The purpose of the driveway is to provide access to a parcel of land which will be split off from the rest of Cizek's property.

B. Conformance With the Land Use Plan:

The Proposed Action has been reviewed and found to be in compliance with the Southcentral Management Framework Plan (MFP), dated March 1980. Objective Number L-2 of the MFP states the BLM intends to "Satisfy needs for rights-of-way."

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses:

The lands have been top-filed by the State of Alaska and a concurrence letter has been received from the State's Department of Natural Resources in accordance with the provisions of ANILCA Section 906(k). The authority to issue the right-of-way (ROW) is Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.

D. Alternatives Considered, But Not Analyzed in Detail:

An Alternative was considered to construct the road from Prudhoe Bay Road down to Eagle River Road, but due to an inactive airstrip and a 37% slope adjacent to the airstrip, it would not meet State of Alaska and Municipality's standards. This Alternative will not be considered further in this document.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE

A. Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action is for the Cizeks to construct a gravel driveway across public lands administered by BLM. The driveway ROW will be approximately 165' x 25' in size when completed. During construction a 40' width will be needed. The type and volume of traffic anticipated is two cars per day with year-round use. The driveway will run from Eagle River Road to Lot 7, Bear Ridge subdivision.

The property is generally described as:

Section 4, T. 13 N., R. 1 E. Seward Meridian, Alaska,
the West one-half of the Northwest one-quarter of the Northwest
one-quarter (W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$), and the Northwest one-quarter of the
Northwest one-quarter of the Southwest one-quarter of the Northwest

one-quarter (NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$), and the West one-half of the East one-half of the Northwest one-quarter of the Southwest one-quarter of the Northwest one-quarter (W $\frac{1}{2}$ E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$), all within Section 4, T. 13 N., R. 1 E., Seward Meridian, records of the Anchorage Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska.

A drawing of the project is attached.

The applicants would like to begin the project as early as May 2004, and will take no more than two days to complete the construction. There will be a work crew of two people. This will include the labor and equipment operators. The Eagle River road will be used as access to haul materials and equipment for the proposed project. Equipment will include a dump truck, one D-3 Dozer, and one excavator to remove tree stumps.

Clearing

Clearing, grading and other disturbance of soil and vegetation will be limited to a 40' wide construction area. Earthwork areas will be cleared of vegetation and piled inside the ROW. Approximately ten trees, 6 to 8 inches in diameter and four trees 2 to 4 inches in diameter will be removed. All trees and brush will be hauled off at the time of construction and taken to the Eagle River landfill.

Construction

There will be approximately 100 to 110 cubic yards of fill material placed to establish the road bed. The fill slope will be constructed by pushing the soil downhill and compacting the material with equipment. During construction a 40' width will be needed. Once construction is completed the driveway will be 25' wide.

The proposed location was inspected by BLM's engineer who found that the ground varied with slopes up to 32% but that the road could be built in the proposed location. A copy of the Alaska Preconstruction Manual 1190-1, Driveway Standards is attached.

Maintenance and Operation

Maintenance of the ROW includes grading, snow clearance, and adding additional culverts and erosion control structures or revegetation, if needed.

B. No Action Alternative:

The No Action Alternative is to continue current management without the development of an access road.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Critical Elements:

The following critical elements of the human environment have been analyzed and are either not present or will not be affected by the Proposed Action or the Alternative:

- Air Quality
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- Environmental Justice
- Farmlands (Prime or Unique)
- Flood plains
- Invasive, Non-native Species
- Native American Religious Concerns
- Water Quality (Surface/Ground)
- Wetlands/Riparian Zones
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wilderness

1. Cultural Resources:

The Anchorage Field Office archaeologist inspected the parcel on May 31st, 2002 and no cultural resources were observed. With the inclusion of the standard ROW stipulation concerning previously unknown cultural resources, no further consultation is necessary under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

2. T&E Species:

The Proposed Action has been analyzed and was determined to have no effect on any threatened and endangered species or their habitat. Therefore, no consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is considered necessary pursuant to Section 7 of the Act and none will be undertaken.

3. Wastes, Hazardous and Solid:

There are no known hazardous or solid waste sites within the project area.

4. Subsistence:

The subject lands fall under the authority of the Federal Subsistence Board and the Subsistence Management Regulations for the Harvest of Wildlife on Federal Public Lands in Alaska. The lands are currently open to all Alaska rural residents for the purpose of black bear, upland game and furbearer harvest.

B. Land Status:

The lands are top-filed by the State of Alaska and are withdrawn for power-site classification. The State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources issued a concurrence letter in accordance with Section 906(k) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), on July 13, 1998.

C. Vegetation:

A narrow strip of forest made up of white spruce, birch and aspen border the highway where the road will start. Beyond this narrow strip of trees there is a power line ROW. Adjacent to the ROW area are grasses, lichens, small shrubs, and birch that are periodically mowed. On the north side of the ROW, birch, some aspen, cottonwood and white spruce dominate the site.

D. Visual Resources:

This area is managed under a Class III Objective for Visual Resource Management. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention, but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Driveways similar to this proposed action are common in this area as there are many private residences in this area.

E. Wildlife:

The area around Eagle River road provides habitat for most of the terrestrial animal species found in south central Alaska. Moose are common and use the area for calving in the spring and wintering habitat. Black bear, brown bear and wolf use the tract and move from higher elevations during seasonal changes or in search of food sources such as berries, salmon and moose calves. Brown bear are common in the Eagle River corridor during summer salmon runs. Snowshoe hares are abundant and support a lynx population that cycle with the hare population. Other animals include beaver, red fox, porcupine, red squirrel, wood frog and several species of micro tine rodents.

There are about 20 bird species that are year round residents, and an additional 21 migrant species that breed here. Horned owls, saw-whet and boreal owls breed in the area's forest habitats, and bald eagles nest in adjacent areas and use the area's prey base to raise young. Resident and migrant land birds use forest and shrub habitats during fall migration. The olive-sided flycatcher, gray-cheeked thrush, Townsend's warbler, and blackpoll warbler are seasonally present and are included on the State of Alaska's list for Species of Special Concern. There have

been no wildlife surveys completed in this area to determine numbers or distribution in the area of the Proposed Action.

F. Forestry:

The area is covered with sub-merchantable sized hardwoods (primarily aspen and birch) and white spruce which have regenerated following previous disturbance.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:

1. Critical Elements:

a. Cultural Resources:

There should be no impact to cultural resources from the Proposed Action.

b. Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species:

The impact of the Proposed Action on T&E plants and animals and their habitats has been evaluated in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. Based on currently available information, the Proposed Action would not affect any T&E species or their habitats. Therefore, no consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is considered necessary pursuant to Section 7 of the Act and none will be undertaken.

c. Wastes, Hazardous & Solid:

Land clearing and road construction machinery will utilize fuel and other materials which contain oil and/or hazardous substances such as batteries, fuel/oil/grease, and pesticides (insect repellent). The driveway will be traversed by motor vehicles during and after subsequent subdivision and development of the Cizek's lot. Non-hazardous solid waste (trash) will be generated also. Potential for harm to the environment is presented by risks associated with spills and/or leaks of oil and/or hazardous substances from the construction equipment and motor vehicles, and improper management of wastewater and trash.

d. Subsistence:

The Proposed Action will not significantly restrict Federal subsistence uses, decrease the abundance of subsistence resources, alter the distribution of subsistence resources, or limit qualified subsistence user access from currently existing conditions. No further analysis is necessary at this time.

Vegetation:

Some of the trees along the highway and north of the ROW will have to be removed to allow for construction of the driveway. The cleared area will be approximately 6,500 square feet. After construction vegetation will re-establish along the road and the permanent vegetation loss will be approximately 4,100 square feet.

3. Wildlife:

The construction of a driveway road ROW will have minimal impacts to wildlife. The ROW will result in increased residential development in the area, which is within ½ mile of Eagle River, where brown bears are attracted to feed on summer salmon runs. Increased residential development in the area may increase the potential for the taking of bears for defense of life and property.

4. Forestry:

The Proposed Action will involve the cutting of an area approximately 165' x 25'. The removal of this material is expected to have little impact to the forestry resource in the area. Stands of sub-merchantable mixed hardwoods and spruce are common in the surrounding area. The existing trees are approximately 2 to 5 inches in diameter and have no commercial value.

After the trees are felled, if left in place, they may contribute to the potential increase of fire fuels and provide a breeding ground for undesirable insects leading to potential insect infestations. If the harvested trees are removed, burned, or chipped in place, the potential impacts from remaining slash will be inconsequential.

5. Noise:

Noise will be concentrated where excavation is taking place, such as noise caused by engine equipment.

6. Soils:

Soil structure will be altered where soil materials are removed. Some productive soil will be buried during construction and operation.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts to existing resources.

C. Cumulative Impacts:

The Proposed Action will add slightly to the general area loss of vegetation and soil as the area is developed. Likewise, the loss of wildlife habitat will add to the overall loss of habitat in the area.

D. Mitigation Measures:

1. Waste, Hazardous and Solid:

All wastes should be managed in accordance with State of Alaska and Federal laws and regulations. Pollution Prevention and Spill Response stipulations should be included with the ROW. Specifically, stipulations should address proper management requirements for wastewater, hazardous and non-hazardous solid waste, and spill prevention and response. Suggested stipulations for Pollution Prevention and Spill Response are attached.

2. Vegetation:

Vegetative material, including trees, harvested under the Proposed Action should either be removed from the area or burned or chipped on site to reduce potential fire fuels and insect breeding areas. If the applicant elects to utilize the material for personal use fuel wood, he should be issued a free use permit to authorize this use. The applicant may not sell or barter the material harvested under this authorization without the proper commercial permit.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A. Persons and Agencies Consulted:

The State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, has no objection to this project being conducted. Matanuska Electric Association has no objection to this project being conducted as long as it does not interfere with the maintenance to the overhead powerline adjacent to the Proposed Action.

B. List of Preparers:

Dorothy Bonds, Realty Specialist - Lead Preparer
Donna Redding, Archaeologist
Larry Beck, Environmental Protection Specialist
Bruce Seppi, Wildlife Biologist
Dave Kelley, Natural Resources Specialist
Mike Zaidlicz, Forester
Mike Scott, Fisheries Biologist
Jake Schlapfer, Recreation Planner
Jeff Denton, Subsistence Coordinator